



RTCA in Wisconsin

The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. The National Park Service (NPS) staff provide technical assistance to community groups, city, county, tribal governments, and non-profit organizations working to enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation and natural resource conservation opportunities. We help local leaders plan and design trails and parks; conserve and improve access to natural areas; protect special places; and create recreation opportunities.

The RTCA program in Wisconsin offers a wide range of services that can be tailored to meet the needs of an individual project. The NPS staff members are trained facilitators who encourage project leaders to build collaborative partnerships among governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. The program helps communities and groups define their vision, goals, and objectives; analyze issues and opportunities; and develop strategic action plans and time lines for projects. We do not provide financial assistance, but can help project partners identify and secure sources of funding and technical support.

Any community with committed project partners can apply for assistance. Believing the best plans are completed locally, the National Park Service will work with partners to encourage broad-based community participation in planning, designing, and implementing the projects we support.

In 2016, the National Park Service in Wisconsin will work on a variety of projects including:

- **Chippewa River Water Trail** – The project goal is to link water access sites to foster safe river recreation and increased physical activity among students and others residents. The water trail will provide people in the community an awareness about and stewardship for the river's history and environment. (Location: Northwest Wisconsin)
- **Driftless Area Trail System** – The project goal is to develop a 41-mile hiking trail in the Driftless Region of Wisconsin to connect state parks (Governor Dodge, Tower Hill); private conservation land; and Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin with Cave of the Mounds National Natural Landmark. (Location: Southwest Wisconsin)
- **Illinois-Wisconsin Fox River Water Trail** – The project goal is to create a well-designed, well-managed water trail on the entire Fox River to provide suitable access to the public for their enjoyment of the quietude, scenic beauty, and historical and cultural features of the river. (Location: Lisbon, Wisconsin to Ottawa, Illinois)
- **Mississippi River Connections Collaborative/Geotourism** – The project goal is to increase recognition of America's Great River, enhance the existing resources, acquire funding for conservation and development, and ensure that all Americans can enjoy these assets in the future. (Location: Mississippi River, from its headwaters to the Gulf of Mexico)



Hikers exploring the Driftless Area Trail System

Recent Success Story

Merrill River Bend Trail – Merrill River Bend Trail along the Wisconsin River was officially opened in August, 2015. Residents raised \$980,000 to connect this rural town of 10,000 to Council Grounds State Park 2.5 miles upstream. An abandoned railroad corridor and industrial riverside properties were purchased to construct the trail and create Rotary Park at the trailhead; a vacant warehouse was purchased to create a community center in Rotary Park. RTCA staff organized local volunteers into a steering committee, engaged public participation, and developed a trail concept plan and

action agenda. Partnerships were strengthened between the city and non-governmental organization; citizen engagement significantly increased. "Thanks for all of your work; it meant so much to us! We still have work to do, but as you can see we have community support and everyone wants to see this trail to completion in the next couple of years. It has been a very exciting ride." - Debbie Kinsey, Friends of River Bend Trail

For more information about the RTCA program refer to: www.nps.gov/rtca, or for information about ongoing or potential RTCA projects in Wisconsin contact:

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